© Crown copyright • www.metoffice.gov.uk

Severe weather, 30-31 March 2010

1 April 2010

Background

Snow, gales and heavy rain hit Scotland and Northern Ireland over 30-31 March 2010, leading to severe transport and power problems. England and Wales were also affected by heavy rain and gales.

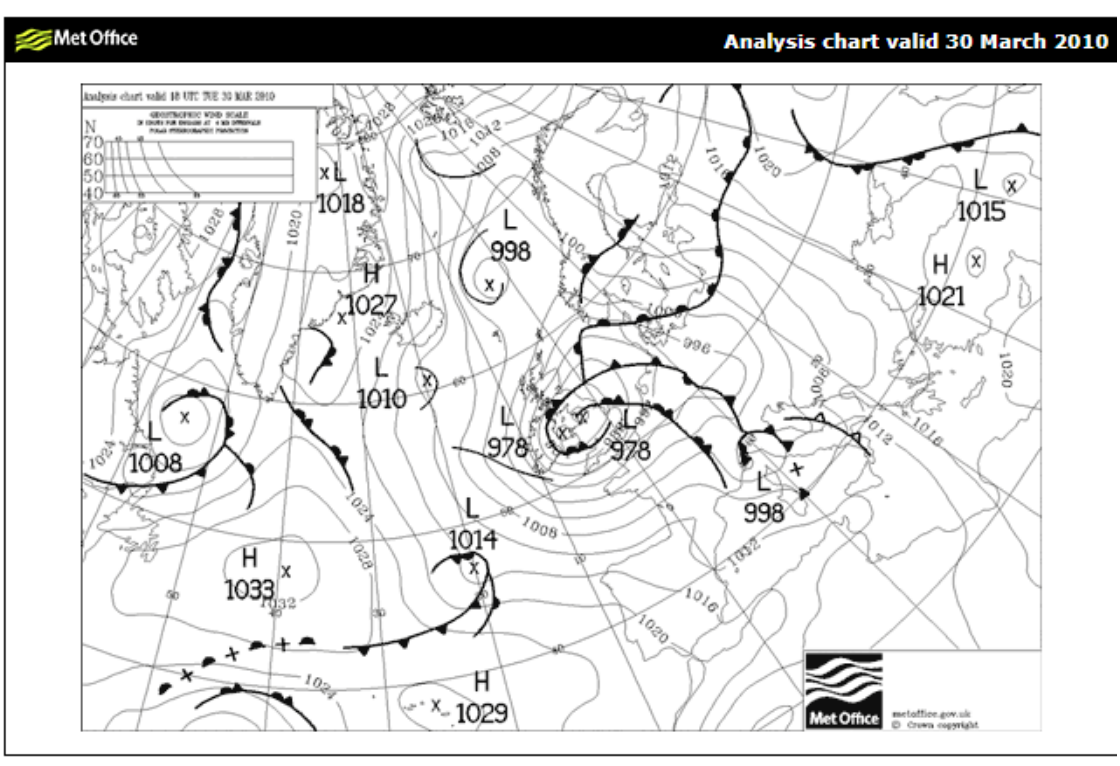
This was caused by an area of low pressure and weather fronts moving slowly across the UK. As the low moved east it dragged cold Arctic air from the north, turning rain to snow, especially across Scotland and Northern Ireland and also over higher ground further south.

Weather data

Reports of snow depths across Scotland, Northern Ireland and the north of England included 38 cm in Lough Fea, 28 cm in Aviemore and 4 cm in Blackburn.

Northern Ireland was particularly wet with total daily rainfalls on Tuesday, 30 March of 54.2 mm at Helens Bay and 50.8 mm at Stormont Castle (both County Down), and 39.6 mm at both Ballykelly (County Londonderry) and Castlederg (County Tyrone). The Southern Uplands in Scotland were also very wet with 42.4 mm reported at Charterhall (Berwickshire) and 35.2 mm at Abermarle (Northumberland).

On Tuesday 30 March the highest recorded wind speeds included gusts of 93 m.p.h. at the Cairnwell (Aberdeenshire), 74 m.p.h. at Needles Old Battery (Isle of Wight), 67 m.p.h. at Orlock Head (County Down), 61 m.p.h. at Plymouth and 58 m.p.h. at Edinburgh (Blackford Hill).



Impacts

The worst impacts were in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where transport links were affected as snow and ice covered roads. Coupled with the strong winds, this led to a series of accidents including a bus crash in South Lanarkshire that sadly resulted in the death of a 17-year-old girl. Rail services were disrupted, with the East Coast Main Line closed between Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed after flooding and landslips. Ferry crossings between Scotland and Northern Ireland were also cancelled and Belfast International Airport was closed for a few hours due to the heavy snow.

Girl killed in school coach crash as heavy snow hits UK

Strong winds brought down power lines covered in snow and ice with up to 100,000 homes in Northern Ireland and almost 30,000 in Scotland left without power and many schools were closed. Floods in eastern Northern Ireland also caused problems. In Scotland, there were many trees down in the east and tidal flooding in the Fife area.

Heavy snow creates travel chaos across Scotland

Bad weather causing NI disruption

More than 100 rail passengers were stranded on the Glasgow to Inverness line when their train became stuck in a snowdrift on Wednesday evening.

Thousands of homes still without power after a second day of heavy snow and blizzards brought travel chaos and misery across Scotland

How we did

On Friday, 26 March we issued the first Advisory for heavy rain and snow across northern Britain on Tuesday, 30 March. This was updated on a daily basis over the weekend and the level raised to an Early Warning of Severe Weather on Sunday, 28 March.

On Tuesday, 30 March we issued Emergency Flash Warnings for Scotland and Northern Ireland, for a combination of severe gales and heavy snow resulting in severe blizzards and severe drifting snow. These are issued very rarely and are the highest level of warning for severe weather. The last examples of when we issued an Emergency Flash Warning were in January for the heavy snow in southern England and for the Cumbrian floods in November.

Throughout this period our Public Weather Service Advisors talked to emergency responders about the upcoming snow and heavy rain, helping them to put emergency procedures into place to prepare for the impact of the weather. The Advisors were in constant contact with responders during the heavy snowfall and rain. We also kept the Scottish and Northern Ireland Government departments and Cabinet Office officials briefed on the situation.

Next steps

The weather will remain unsettled over the Easter Weekend with further spells of rain or showers, but the chance of snow is lower as temperatures pick up to near normal.

Stay up to date with the latest weather forecasts and warnings.

Contact information

Met Office Press Office: **+44 (0)1392 886655**

E-mail: Press Office

Met Office Customer Centre: **0870 900 0100**

If you're outside the UK: **+44 1392 885680**